

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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TAGS: SOPN, KS, US

SUBJECT: KOREAN PRESS ON US-ROK ISSUES

REF: SEOUL 0096 (DTG 060721Z JAN 78)

SUMMARY: KOREAN PRESS WEEKEND OF JANUARY 7-8 TREATED WIDE VARIETY OF US-ROK ISSUES. MAIN FOCUS WAS ON PAK TONG-SUN CASE, PARTICULARLY JAWORSKI EFFORTS TO OBTAIN PAK TESTIMONY FOR CONGRESS. HOWEVER, ARRIVAL OF CIVILETTI, AND PLANNED PARTICIPATION OF REPRESENTATIVE CAPUTO ALSO REPORTED PROMINENTLY WITH EMPHASIS ON EVIDENCE OF SPLIT IN HOUSE ETHICS COMMITTEE. CONGRESSMAN STRATTON'S COMMENT ON REVIEW OF TROOP WITHDRAWAL DREW WIDE ATTENTION, WHILE CANCELLATION OF ASST. SECY DERIAN VISIT ALSO NOTED AS POSSIBLE INDICATION US LESS CRITICAL THAN IN RECENT PAST. PRESS ALSO REPORTS ROKG SEEKING FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING WITH U.S., WHILE SPECULATION ON SUMMIT MEETING REMAINS ALIVE. OVERALL TONE, SUMMARIZED IN TONGA ILBO EDITORIAL, IS ONE OF WIDESPREAD CONCERN OVER FUTURE OF US-ROK RELATIONS, TEMPERED WITH CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM THAT 1978 WHILE EVENTFUL COULD SEE SOME IMPROVEMENT. END SUMMARY.

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1. PRESS OVER WEEKEND OF JANUARY 7-8 REPORTED FURTHER ON EFFORTS BY HOUSE ETHICS COMMITTEE TO OBTAIN PAK TONGS-SON TESTIMONY. PAPERS JANUARY 7 REPORT JAWORSKI REQUEST FOR AGREEMENT ON BEHALF OF COMMITTEE SIMILAR TO THAT REACHED BY JUSTICE DEPARTMENT. JAWORSKI QUOTED AS SAYING THAT FAILURE OF PAK TO TESTIFY BEFORE CONGRESS "WILL SURELY RESULT IN MOST SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR KOREA". HIS DEMAND FOR

OTHER WITNESSES, INCLUDING FORMER AMBASSADOR KIM TONG-CHO, ALSO REPORTED.

2. ROKG RESPONSE ALONG LINES INDICATED REFTEL SUPPLEMENTED BY FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN SAYING THAT CONGRESSIONAL SUBPOENA APPEARED TO "DEVIATE FROM THE SPIRIT OF THE JOINT DECLARATION". BUT THAT "THE ACTIVITIES OF THE HOUSE ETHICS COMMITTEE . . . CONSTITUTE US INTERNAL AFFAIRS" AND THE ROKG HOPED THE JOINT DECLARATION WOULD BE RESPECTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE. THE SPOKESMAN ADDED THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD NEVER COMMENTED FORMALLY ON THE CONGRESSIONAL SUBPOENA, DENYING REPORTS THAT THE MINISTER HAD SAID IT SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN. ANOTHER STORY FROM WASHINGTON BY ORIENT PRESS SUGGESTED THAT THE ETHICS COMMITTEE DEMAND MADE A FURTHER NEGOTIATION IEVITABLE.

3. KOREA HERALD JANUARY 8 CARRIED ORIENT PRESS REPORT OF EVANS-NOVAK COLUMN JAN. 6, DEFENDING DECEMBER 31 AGREEMENT AS "LAST BEST HOPE" TO PREVENT THE PAK TONGS-SON SCANDAL FROM PERMANENTLY DAMAGING US-ROK RELATIONS. COLUMN CONCLUDES THAT USE OF US AID AS LEVER IN THE CASE WOULD BE "DANGEROUS TO US FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS".

4. SCHEDULED ARRIVAL OF CIVILETTI TEAM JANUARY 8 REPORTED PROMINENTLY. STORY INDICATES INITIAL PLANS ARE FOR CIVILETTI TO SIGN AGREEMENT AND INTERVIEW PAK, BUT THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MAIN QUESTIONING SCHEDULED TO START AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF ADDITIONAL OFFICIALS FRIDAY. FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCES SAID THEY DO NOT RULE OUT DISCUSSION BETWEEN CIVILETTI AND PAK ON LATTER'S TESTIMONY BEFORE CONGRESS, BUT STRESSED THAT WHATEVER AGREEMENT IS REACHED IS "ENTIRELY BWTWEEN THE AMERICAN OFFICIALS AND PAK TONG-SON".

5. PRESS FURTHER REPORTS PLANS FOR REPRESENTATIVE CAPUTO TO PARTICIPATE IN QUESTIONING OF PAK, IN ADDITION TO SENATE COMMITTEE STAFFER SCHILLINGER. COLUMNS JANUAR 8 INDICATE FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCES ENCOURAGED BY THIS DEVELOPMENT. COLUMNS FURTHER COMMENT THAT CAPUTO'S PRESENCE, DESPITE JAWORSKI'S DECISION OT TO SEND A STAFFER, INDICATES COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT "MASSES" BEING "DRAGGED ABOUT BY JAWORSKI".

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6. CANCELLATION OF ASST SECY DERIAN'S VISIT WAS NOTED OVER THE WEEKEND. WHILE FOREIGN MINISTRY DENIED KNOWLEDGE OF REASONS, THEY WERE DESCRIBED AS "RELIEVED OF TENSION" CAUSED BY PROSPECTS OF HER MEETINGS WITH DISSIDENTS. AN UNIDENTIFIED SOURCE SUGGESTED THE CANCELLATION MIGHT BE RELATED TO RELEASE OF EMERGENCY MEASURE VIOLATORS.

7. CALLS OF CODEL STRATTON ON PRESIDENT PAK AND PRIME MINISTER CHOE WERE ALSO FRONT PAGED JANUARY 8. STORIES INDICATED THAT DISCUSSION WITH PAK CONCERNED TROOP WITHDRAWAL ISSUE. WHILE NO DETAILS REPORTED ON CONTENTS OF BLUE HOUSE MEETING, STRATTON WAS SAID TO HAVE REPEATED TO PRIMIN CHOE HIS VIEW THAT CONGRESSIONAL DELIBERATIONS ON TROOP WITHDRAWAL MAY LEAD TO SOME CHANGES IN THE PLAN. CHOE FOR HIS PART REPORTEDLY TOLD STRATTON THAT MAINTAINING A DIVISION IN KOREA WOULD BE OF STRATEGIC VALUE FOR THE U.S.

8. RELATED STORIES CONCERNED A NEW YORK TIMES REPORT OF A USG STUDY TITLED "MILITARY STRATEGY AND FORCE POSTURE REVIEW" WHICH ALLEGEDLY INDICATED NORTH KOREA COULD TAKE SEOUL IN A SURPRISE ATTACK BUT NOT HOLD IT

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AND THAT USG HAD HAD SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT PLANS FOR FORCE REDUCTIONS IN KOREA. PRESS ALSO QUOTED ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE STATEMENT IN HONG KONG REAFFIRMING IMPORTANCE OF EA REGION TO THE U.S. AND ACKNOWLEDGING CONCERN IN REGION OVER PROSPECTS OF U.S. WITHDRAWAL.

9. HIGH LEVEL MEETINGS BETWEEN U.S. AND ROK WERE SUBJECT OF ARTICLES JANUARY 7, CITING "DIPLOMATIC SOURCES" ON ROKG EXPLORATION OF MEETING BETWEEN FOREIGN MINISTER PAK AND SECRETARY VANCE IN FEBRUARY OR MARCH. OCCASION WOULD OSTENSIBLY BE PAK'S TRANSIT OF U.S. EN ROUTE CHIEFS OF MISSION CONFERENCE IN EUROPE. STORY FURTHER INDICATED THAT "TIME NOT RIPE" FOR MEETING AT PRESIDENTIAL LEVEL, BUT SOURCES "DID NOT DISMISS THE POSSIBILITY THAT SUMMIT TALKS MIGHT BE SOUGHT IF THE TWO COUNTRIES SAW AN IMMEDIATE NEED".

10. TONGA ILBO EDITORIAL JANUARY 7 ON U.S.-ROK RELATIONS OBSERVED AMBIVALENCE IN FOREIGN MINISTRY ATTITUDES ON THIS SUBJECT AND REFLECTED SIMILAR VIEW ON ITS OWN PART. STRESSING THAT DIPLOMATIC TASK FOR THE YEAR IS TO ACHIEVE TURN AROUND IN U.S.-ROK RELATIONS FROM "TURBULENT... CONFLICT AND TENSION OF THE PAST YEAR INTO TRADITIONAL FRIENDLY COOPERATION" THE PAPER NOTES THAT TROOP WITHDRAWAL AND CONTINUATION OF PAK TONG-SON CASE WILL BRING NEW DIMENSION TO THE RELATIONSHIP, AND EXPRESSES CONCERN THAT LINKAGE OF THE TWO COULD CAUSE PROBLEMS TO INCREASE. EDITORIAL CONCLUDES WITH DISCUSSION OF PROSPECTS FOR SUMMIT MEETING, NOTING THAT SUCH MEETINGS HAVE TRADITIONALLY FOLLOWED CHANGES OF GOVERNMENT IN U.S. AND SUGGESTING THAT RESOLUTION OF PAK CASE MIGHT BE OCCASION FOR SUCH TALKS; HOWEVER, EDITORIAL NOTES, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SOME OBSERVERS ARE DOUBTFUL OF POSSIBILITY OF SUCH A DEVELOPMENT.

11. COMMENT: THE BROAD EXTENT AND SOMEWHAT AMBIVALENT TONE OF THE WEEKEND PRESS SEEMS TO REFLECT A GENERAL ATTITUDE IN SEOUL, MARKED BY CONTINUED WIDESPREAD CONCERN OVER THE COURSE OF U.S.-KOREAN RELATIONS. CAUTIOUS HOPE EMERGES, HOWEVER THAT THE PROBLEMS IN THAT RELATIONSHIP, WHILE NOT LIKELY TO BE FULLY RESOLVED DURING THE YEAR, MAY TURN OUT TO BE LESS INTRACTABLE THAN THEY WERE IN 1977. STERN

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